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Mr. Les Whitten
1401 16 St., NW
Wash., D.C. 20037

12/10/77

Dear Les,

Whether or not this morning's colum appears in the WxPost the way it went out and whether or not it went out in the form in which you turned it in, it presents me with serious integrity problems. These will be magnified when you take your year off.

When you told me you would be taking this year off for other work I asked you to give me the name of an associate I might trust. If what happened to what I gave you is what I can expect, don't bother. I won't have anything to do with this kind of direct and deliberate dishonesty. As I will not accept what the House assassins committee is doing when I have criticized the Warren Commission and others for doing the same thing and will not be part of the Park Lane type of abuse of all officialdom, I also will be be part of anybody's indulgence of propagandistic instincts or perhaps compulsion for self-justification.

As it appeared inim today's Wx Post (distinction from our local Post which does not carry the column Saturdays) the opening graf is an overt lie and has no relationship to the records I gave you or any other records.

Nor is this kind of interpretation justified from the records I gave you or from any other records. Likewise is the interpretation of the last sentence false. It is not just baseless. With these for openers and close, no need to bother with what lies between them. Except, of course, that the column eliminated the real news in what I gave you - that the Army knew before the FBI that Oswald supposedly had false credentials on him, knew this and reported it to the FBI in a city distant from Dallas before the first interrogation of Oswald was over and before the FBI got to see Oswald at Dallas police headquarters.

So the Army was not "ahead of everyone else in establishing the background of Lee Harvey Oswald as the killer of John F. Kennedy," something that as a matter of fact is a non-sequatur if taken literally and is an abandonment of traditional journalistic ethics and practise. There has been no trial. Oswald, rightly or wrongly, insisted he had killed nobody. Decency in journalism, regardless of the writer's belief, requires a qualifier, like "alleged killer," or the accused one, etc.

As I remember it you read me what you wrote to be certain of accuracy. As I remember it what you wrote, while not what I would have written, was neither inaccurate nor official propaganda. So I assume that you did not rewrite the item in the manner in which it appears.

I have another and a personal objection to this. The column, as do all other writers, bears a heavy responsibility to sources. This responsibility, above all, requires fidelity to what a source provides. The source is totally at the mercy of the writer. The writer of a column or any other item therefore controls the reputation of the source and the source's integrity and reputation for integrity.

Perfection is not a human state but I defy you or Jack to find anyone who will say to my face that in all my 64+ years I lied to him or deliberately deceived him. If I have made my mistakes, too, I'm proud they are so few and in the field in which I work I'll stack my record against any other, including all officials. If I cannot depend on Jack to meet the responsibility I entrusted to him through you (who I do trust) I have no choice. I can't give him another chance. Without some assurance that this will not be repeated, believe me, I will not.

In this and other recent instances I have given you what held up through some of the most elaborate and exhaustive journalistic examinations of the largest single batch of official records once secret that were ever turned over to the press. Your interests were protected, it required some time and effort of me and a friend, and your spread was no problem to you. You had significant stories. This one was remade a la Goebbels. Regretfully,